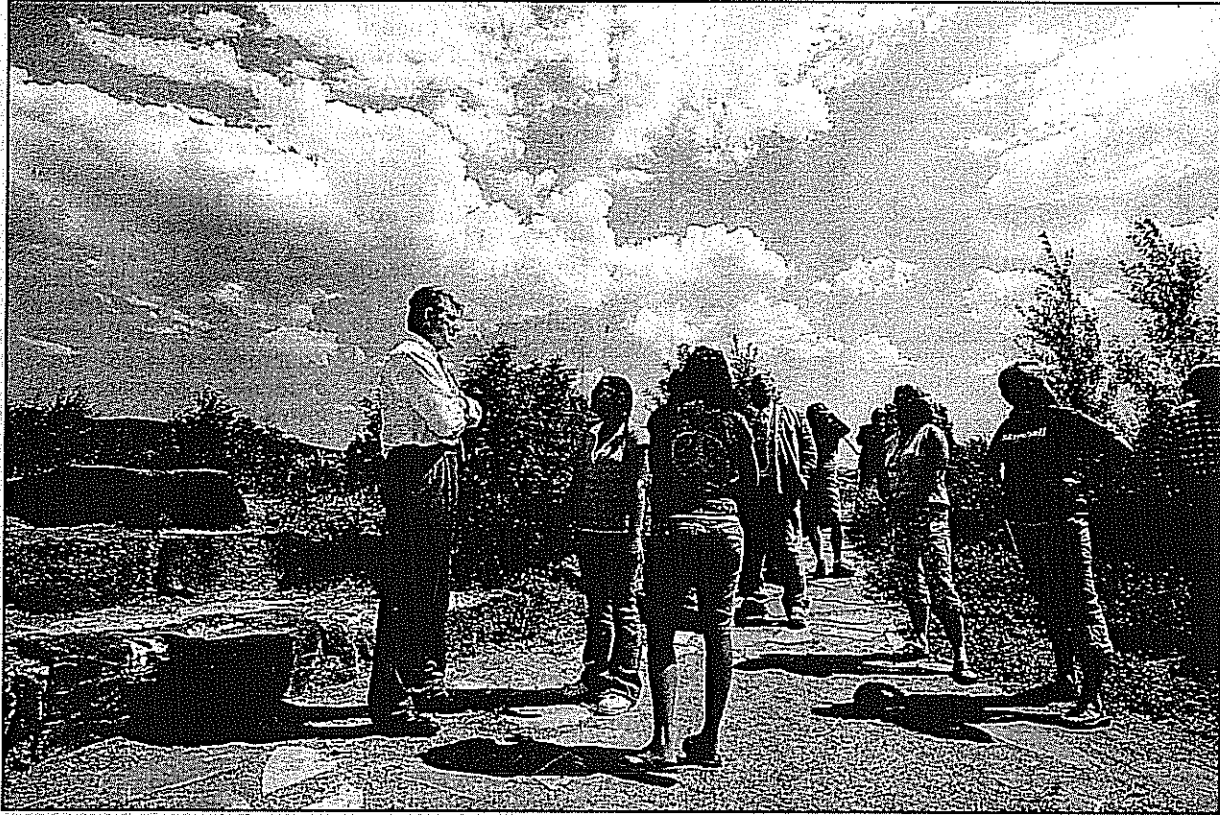


Otter visits



BILL SCHAEFER/IDAHO STATE JOURNAL

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter talks with teenagers during a media event Wednesday at the Edson Fichter Nature Area in Pocatello highlighting the impact of stimulus funds on the Idaho Department of Labor's Summer Youth Employment Program.

Governor tours area in support of stimulus projects

BY YANN RANAIVO
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POCATELLO — Though he has voiced concerns about the federal stimulus package, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter said during a local visit Wednesday the money is beneficial when it comes to creating jobs, which in the long run boosts the economy.

During his tour of east Idaho, Otter saw local projects firsthand that will benefit from stimulus funds. He attended the groundbreaking of a road-

widening project Wednesday afternoon. The governor then traveled to the Edson Fichter Nature Area, where he met teenagers and young adults taking part in a statewide, stimulus-funded summer employment program.

The widening project will add a third lane to the eastbound portion of Interstate 86 between the Chubbuck and Interstate 15 interchange. The widening will continue to the Pocatello Creek Road interchange on I-15. The entire project, which bid at \$8 million, is being funded with stimulus money.

ONLINE

See video from this story at idahostatejournal.com.

The Summer Youth Employment Program, which is administered by the Idaho Department of Labor, was funded with nearly \$3 million in stimulus money and has approximately 840 seasonal employees, many of whom come from low-income families.

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Otter

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Otter said the road project and the summer employment program have both created a large number of jobs.

"For the first time, these kids have summer jobs that they can develop into a career," he said, "and that's long-term growth for us."

Those taking part in IDL's summer employment program are working with agencies, cities or nonprofit organizations. Some of the jobs include the management of wildlife habitats, custodial work and shelving books at public libraries.

"What I've seen is that it's changed 840 lives," Otter

said. "When you see those kids saying, 'I cleaned that (wildlife habitat),' it makes you feel good."

During the groundbreaking ceremony, guest speakers shared Otter's view that the less congested traffic flow would attract more commerce in the future.

"This is the Gate City, not just because of the railroad, but also because of the interstates that run through here," said Pocatello Mayor Roger Chase. "It keeps our mom and pops (stores) going, and it keeps our Costcos and Lowe's moving."

The road-widening, which the Idaho Transportation Department plans to finish by 2011, is expected to create approximately 145 jobs.

"We need to focus on the next generation (of drivers)," Otter said. "Almost every product we produce

IN HIS WORDS

Michael Eldridge, 21, is taking part in the Idaho Department of Labor's Summer Youth Employment Program, which allows low-income teenagers and young adults to work for government agencies, cities or nonprofit organizations. Eldridge, who has worked for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game this summer, said his jobs have included the removal of weeds from wildlife habitats.

"I learned a lot about weeds. I never knew much about them until I started working with Fish and Game," he said. "They all have different effects, but they drive wildlife away by getting some animals sick, especially the deer."

in the state goes somewhere else (out of state)."

Ed Bala, the district engineer at the local ITD office, said Yellowstone Avenue and I-15 each see about 30,000 cars per day. He hopes stimulus money can continue funding road projects and mentioned an effort to improve a portion

of I-15 between Downey and the Devils Creek Reservoir.

"If we don't get stimulus for that project (between Downey and Devils Creek Reservoir), it might take a while for us to fund it," he said, adding ITD has yet to begin scheduling the project.